

Interview with: Elizabeth Joseph  
Interviewer: Jay Haymond & Suzi Montgomery  
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Jay: First of all, it would be helpful to have a little background on you for context.

Where were you born? And the family in which you were born.

Elizabeth: I was born in Bozeman, Montana, and raised as a very traditional Methodist. In my teenage years I was very involved with a Christian youth organization, Young Life. They were the ones that were shot up in Ft. Worth/Dallas. It was my aspiration to work for Young Life. My boyfriend was like me, a college counselor to Young Life- to highschoolers. So somehow I figured a law degree- I negotiated with my parents, because I never worked, I said, "If you will let me go to school this summer so I can graduate in three years instead of four, I will take the law school admissions test." Well, darn me. I scored in the top 3% in the nation. So I applied to the University of Tucson because my two best friends from college, Budica and Joanna, had married Alex. I figured, after looking at a map, "Okay, well that would be okay that's pretty close", I will be able to see him too. He became my fiancé, he got a job with Kennecott Copper in Tucson. We were just living the American dream. When I became a senior, that's when Alex proposed.

Jay: I was thinking about the influence of these two friends of yours being his wives, they were hoping...

Elizabeth: Yes.

Jay: What is that? Is there a chemistry there that you would share with us?

Elizabeth: Well, there were six of us, and it was the early 70's and sororities were out. Then there was us, living in what we called "2411" that was our address. And Joanna was the weird one, she was the one we picked up. We needed somebody to pay rent, and Joanna was famous for not liking girls. She didn't have girlfriends; she hung with the boys, constantly. But anyway we decided over dinner in dorm room, whatever, dorm or cafeteria, we invited her to live with us, and she accepted. Joanna was really unusual because she was a national merit scholar; she was on all kinds of scholarships in college. Her freshman year she just flourished because she was in this special program for gifted students that was wonderful. That is how she met Alex because one of her tutors was one of Alex's' and that is how they met. So her sophomore year, when we all moved off campus together, Joanna was always the weird one, we always said, "Joanna always was the one who drug home all the weird friends," and she did. And one of them she drug home was Alex Joseph. So Joanna showed up in our sophomore year. We were raised to go to college, pick a career, pick a husband, and go on. So in our sophomore year, Joanna, she had a really difficult time mainstreaming back into classes. I mean we scheduled getting her out of bed to go to class, she just wasn't used to it after that freshman year. And then we finally figured out, okay we got her out of bed but she's asleep on the couch [*she chuckles as she speaks*] in the lounge in the women's room at the student union. So then we scheduled ourselves to go

wake her up, we would say, "Joanna, you have got to go to Greek class." So she was having a rough time of it. When she announced, two quarters into her sophomore year that she was leaving to marry to Alex, you know, our main argument, or mine, was, "Joanna if marrying him is so right, it will be so right when you graduate." Because we were just programmed to graduate. And she said, "Nope, I'm gone," and she was gone. Well, then we started what turned out to be my senior year, because I'd accelerated all my classes, everybody else it was their junior year. In November we knew Alex was coming to Montana and he left with Budica, my best friend! So that was pretty hard. Then on the verge of engagement, I got this proposal letter from him.

Jay: Let's describe Elizabeth's emotional state at that point.

Elizabeth: Well, what I told my impending fiancé was, I said, "I need to go down there and find out what these guys are doing. And if I like it then you and I will go down there, and maybe do it too. And if I don't like it, I'll come home." I told him, "I don't want twenty years from now saying, maybe if I'd married Alex Joseph then you and I wouldn't be in this pile of trouble." And he was naive enough at twenty-one, twenty-two, to say, "Okay." I mean he drove me to the airport, "Hello!" I came home married.

Jay: Well, he trusted you.

Elizabeth: Yes he did, he did. And he was my best friend when we got back but of course, I had to tell him, "Guess what? I'm marrying." And I didn't tell a whole bunch of other people. They sort of had to deduce it, I guess.

Jay: When you told him that you were married, did you mean that you were married in every sense? Did you convey that to him?

Elizabeth: Yeah, we have always looked at marriage as comprised of three components: one is the contract, we all have a written contract with Alex, the second is a celebration of the contract, which is a ceremony, and third is consummation. And Alex visited different parts of that, let me- except consummation. But he did celebrate contracts, or execute contracts with women that he never consummated. And that's where you hear media reports that said he had twenty wives [*she says in a mocking voice*] or more. He didn't. He had eight, period.

Jay: Well, so that brought you where? Were you living here at that point?

Elizabeth: No, no, I was a senior at the University of Montana. I married him and at twenty years old I was gullible enough to say to him, "If you don't want me to go back to school, I won't." because Joanna and Budica hadn't come back to school. And he said, "You are not squandering that investment your parents have made. You go back and graduate." So I did. And I had been accepted at all these law schools and I was wanting to give that up. He said, "No, you don't give that up."

Jay: Wise man.

Elizabeth: Yes, and kind of amazingly enough, Alex, the only attorneys he had, for whatever reason, when he was mayor, personally, or whatever. They were never me. I never represented Alex.

Jay: Did you ever advise him?

Elizabeth: Oh I advised him a lot, and I still do to this day to the family. But he invested \$50,000 in my career and I never came close to paying it back.

Jay: It occurs to me that he valued your advice, both the wisdom of your personal knowledge as well as your training. And I wonder if he felt whether or not you had repaid him.

Elizabeth: That thought would never have crossed his mind. Never have crossed his mind. That is what I see as a lot of the genius of the patriarchal system, because Alex said, often, that he thought he had a mission and he said, "I could have surrounded myself with guys. But surrounding myself with women as I did- they are way better at executing and advising and that. One of the things he did, in 1978, we found a Confederate Nations of Israel, that was going to meet in a bi-annual business sessions, that weekend. And women with, "a head," as we say, don't hold seats. We have a senate, a sandhedron of seventy, a council of fifty, and a quorum of judges of twenty-four. Women don't hold those seats unless the don't have "a head." And I have just enjoyed the power behind the throne. I wouldn't take a seat if they paid me to give me one. I have got a brother, two sons, and Alex who hold seats in that whole thing, and I speak for them all the time. The power behind the throne [*she laughs*] there is something to that.

Jay: Does that sound like matriarchy or patriarchy?

Elizabeth: It sounds like patriarchy but one of the big extreme points I would like to make is that, and I made it in Salt Lake a couple of weeks ago when I spoke on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, much to my dismay- in a

debate against the National Organization of Women, whose keynote speaker I was in 1997. Being I was debating now, I said, "You know you guys like to think you dreamed up feminism, but the people who dreamed up feminism were the Mormon women of the ninetieth century. Absolutely! I mean my heroes are Eliza Snow, all those people. Back in the 1880's when they were having all those horrible persecutions on a weekly basis, what they called, "great indignation meetings" at the tabernacle. And three thousand women would show up. They were preaching to the choir, sort to speak, but they weren't talking to their audience. They were talking to congress that was really cracking down on the church, and the Eastern press.

Jay: Commission was watching too.

Elizabeth: Yes, and they were so strident [*speaks with passion*] in their defense of plural marriage and the reason to live it. My favorite quote is from Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, who was the first woman legislator in any state or territory, because Mormon women had the right to vote...

Jay: That's right.

Elizabeth: Until they joined the states and lost it forever.

Jay: They had to do that to get into the union.

Elizabeth: That's right. Lose their right to vote for over twenty years. But Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, who was that first legislator, she said, "Show me a woman who cares about something more than cook stoves, diaper flannels, (*and one more word I can't conjure up*) and nine times out of ten I will show you a woman who is a successful mother." I mean how feminist can you get in the

1880's? And that all ended of course in 1896. 1935 which I like to maintain as when the church gave up the practice of polygamy.

Jay: I'm not sure what event marks the end for you.

Elizabeth: What end?

Jay: You say the end of polygamy.

Elizabeth: Oh. Well, what happened is, in 1890 they issued *The Manifesto*. Wilfred Woodruff wrote in his journal, he says, "I'm acting for the temporal concerns of the church, not the spiritual." He issued *The Manifesto*, he had several wives, did he throw them out the door? No, no, no. I believe it was 1910, definitely in the 1900's when Joseph F. Smith, president of the church, was testifying before Congress, this is one of my favorite from the congressional record. They asked him how many wives he had and he said, "Three." And they said, "Do you keep a record of marriages performed in your temple?" I mean we all know every Mormon is buried with a briefcase full of his records. And Joseph F. Smith said, "I don't know, but I could find out."

Jay: It was 1904, by the way.

Elizabeth: Was it? 1904. And they said, "Would you be good enough to find out?" And he said, "No, I would not [*she laughs as she speaks*] be good enough." I love that, "I would not be good enough."

Jay: That is sometimes referred to as *the Second Manifesto*.

Elizabeth: Is it really? Wow, I didn't know that, because we have a third in 1944 when those guys wanted out of prison. But, anyway we have Heber Grant, obviously a 'polyg'. So, my understanding is that it was about mid 1930's

when they actually cracked down and threw all the 'polygs' out, and wouldn't take their tithe and wouldn't let them in the temple. I don't know how close I am but it was somewhere around then. Then it went underground, and got very corrupt, for forty years in my estimation. Because when ever you put anything underground, whether it be drugs, or alcohol, or women available to live this lifestyle, you create a black market where somebody is going to supply that demand. So, until Alex, we like to say "fell out of the closet" in 1975 [*she laughs*] you had all that time of real quiet. I see Alex- he'll go down in history as two things, the father of the sagebrush rebellion, and the father of the independent movement among polygamists, which is easily the fastest growing, I think. To my information it is.

Jay: Let's have you elaborate a bit on that first one, sagebrush rebellion, from your perspective and experience.

Elizabeth: Well, in 1975, March 1975, when Alex and twelve of his friends filed with the Bureau of Land Management 160 acre homesteads...

Jay: Oh, I see.

Elizabeth: Out in Cottonwood Canyon, which is about 25 miles from Big Water. We had a base there because we had bought a 160 acre private parcel. We spread out down the canyon and we showed up at the BLM office with our appropriate applications. Alex had sent me to Phoenix to research it and I found that the Homesteading Act (160 acres) was still on the books, and that in 1936, with the Taylor Act the BLM had sort of run over it. But I figured homestead is still on the books, so we did it and we were sued within the week by the



people of the United States Federal Government. They sent the US Marshals down here to serve us papers. We made great friends with them [*she laughs*]. Unlike a lot of other polygamists we never, we never begrudged the messengers. So there ensued about an eighteen-month lawsuit in federal court in Salt Lake City. The first time I went to federal court in Salt Lake City was when Vernon Anderson was the judge, and he was the prosecutor in the 1944 prosecutions against polygamy.

Jay: Interesting irony.

Elizabeth: Uh huh. We had an attorney; I was in law school at the time. I was sitting with Alex at the defense table and Judge Anderson said, "Would Jane Doe Joseph please stand up." [*they both laugh*] So I stood up and Budica, back in the gallery, stood up and Judge Anderson, he said, "Okay what are your names?" It was great. Anyway we fought it out really intensely for eighteen months. The Federal Government was forever asking for the judge to throw us off in the interim and he wouldn't. But he did issue his ruling, and it is something I studied very much in law school because its implications were so broad, so beyond the little homestead fight in Cottonwood Canyon. When I got to law school and did my environmental law class, our case was just front and center, because it was such a big deal, it was so broad ranging. Essentially the judge ruled, in August of 1975, that we *both* lost. That Taylor had repealed the Homesteading Act even though they neglected to go back there and clean up their books. But (B) that since 1971 four years the Bureau

of Land Management had been operating without any congressional authority whatsoever [*she chuckles*].

Jay: How interesting.

Elizabeth: Yes. They had a sunset clause in 1971 and it just had never been renewed. So that's where we get the 1976 Federal Land Policy & Management Act, which was another big issue in law school. Where the Federal Government for the first time instead of saying we are stewards over public land, that we are taking care of them until they are passed to the states, or individuals, okay, that whole thing had expired. So in 1976 under the Federal Land Policy & Management Act, which sparked the sagebrush rebellion, the Federal Government for the first time said, "Oh forget it, we own that land."

Jay: Yes, there was an enormous study undertaken by the Department of the Interior and out of it came a book by Paul Gates called The History of Land Law Development. That was the document that they used and passed out to all the legislators. In effect it was justification for that legislation. What you just said is true, it gave the Federal Government all of the General Land Office land. It was the Taylor Grazing Act that formed the BLM for the General Land Office land.

Elizabeth: Right.

Jay: Perhaps the thing that was most objectionable from the point of view of the, should we say, the public land states, was that things as usual were going by the way. Now, let's talk about this as a point of demarcation. Describe how that hit here with you folks.

Elizabeth: Well, a couple of things: the state of Utah lives with the fact that whatever hugely proportion amount of its land is in the Federal Government's hands. I find ordinance 3 of the Utah Constitution, so hugely significant. I mean they could have at least split it up and put one here and one there. But no, ordinance 3, section 1, 'all the land, unappropriated land, belongs to the Federal Government'. Section 2, 'polygamy is forever prohibited'. I mean that was their big problem with Brigham Young. He was an extraordinary colonizer, I am not a fan of him when it comes to religion, but boy, that boy knew what he was doing and polygamy was one of his best tools in his pocket. He could send one family to Kanab, Utah, or Orderville with five teenage boys and accomplish in terms of settlement what he would have sent five families to do in monogamy. Anyway, Brigham Young I don't know that he ever said, but I think he certainly intended, that he was going to build this empire west of the Mississippi, this theocratic ruled thing and that's why they got so excited about him. I mean you look at the congressional record before the Civil War and they are screaming about the twin relics of barbarism and slavery and polygamy. I mean they were really worried about Brigham Young.

Jay: The Republican Party were the ones that came up with that slogan.

Elizabeth: Yes, so...what was the question?

Jay: You were going to say that Brigham Young's idea was to block out this kingdom or empire.

Elizabeth: Right, okay, but we started with Alex.

Suzi: Something about how the federal land...

Elizabeth: Oh, okay, yeah. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act has had a really profound influence on us down here. When we incorporated Big Water in 1984, we pretty much represented, the State of Utah was like we were a little baby State of Utah. About 80% of our land in the six square miles represented by the town of Big Water is owned by the Federal Government, and we live with those restrictions. It is kind of amazing, when we try and make them perhaps turn over lots and that, they go look at their appraisals and the highest and best use for this whole town is travel [*she chuckles*]. But we really felt, big time, when the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was created in 1996 -when President Clinton, you know he couldn't dare to step across the Utah line, went to the south rim of the Grand Canyon and 1.7 million acres [*she scoffs*] kiss it good-bye! My lead story tomorrow on the radio is Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance has come out with a report this week and they want wilderness areas closed off to off road vehicle use which we all understand that is the way it is. But they want wilderness study areas cut off which we can kind of understand, because wilderness study areas are supposed to be managed as wilderness. But they want all the ground, the 9 million acres, they want closed off.

Jay: Statewide.

Elizabeth: Statewide to off road vehicle users. And my family is big time off road vehicle users, I mean this is just a Mecca of it. So their talking of shutting us down completely and it is all pursuant in the end to FLPMA, the Federal Land

Policy & Management Act that was passed in 1976. The irony of it is-is my graduation present from law school in 1979, was a, well I had a couple, one of them was a trip to Nevada with Alex. What he was doing was inventorying wilderness for the Federal Government by helicopter. What he would do is fly these federal employees up and drop them off early in the morning, and they would just sit up there and decide if it is pristine wilderness. And then he would fly back with his helicopter in the afternoon and pick them up, "How was your day? Pristine or not so pristine?" [*there is laughter*]. Hey, we made a lot of money off of that, so.

Jay: Were you aware that in that law, you probably read this, that the BLM under FLPMA is responsible for...

End of Side A, Tape 1

Begin Side B

Jay: One of the provisions of FLPMA was to empower the Bureau of Land Management to manage not only natural resources but cultural resources. Up until then the BLM had not been in the practice of devoting much attention or resources to managing cultural resources.

Elizabeth: Right.

Jay: Now maybe there is an interpretation there of what cultural resources are. But the example of the National Park Service has traditionally been to obliterate cultural resources in favor of nature. But the law was quite specific about

preserving cultural resources. Likewise the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is specifically charged to preserve and maybe even promote, is the word in there, cultural resources along with nature. To be fair the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance ought to be, and their like-minded people, ought to be excluded from those wilderness areas while this study is going on.

Elizabeth: Good idea [*she laughs*].

Jay: Not to interrupt the flow of your telling us about this process of your actions.

Elizabeth: No, I agree with you 100% that we have a very responsible, I think, use of our surrounding public lands. Even our homesteading was responsible. And the historical, I mean how the ding-dang heck did this place get settled in the first place? I agree with the premise that if you do take cultural, then okay. The Anasazis, which is politically incorrect to say anymore, the Ancient Pueblos, were here awhile back. But it was awhile back, and we have been here for the twentieth century. And the vehicle has been here for the twentieth century. That is something that Alex used to say all the time and laugh about especially with his work with wilderness inventory. You know who is going up there on top of that mesa and saying, "This would make a nice sub-division." Wilderness is strong enough all by itself. It doesn't need us going "Oh, that's wilderness." It just shouts at us and defies us.

Jay: The existence of your organization here in Big Water has posed a bit of a, I don't want to use the word [?], but it has posed maybe a challenge, for local

county authorities. Do you want to talk about that a bit? How it has over the years?

Elizabeth: Yeah. We came here in 1975, and like Alec says we moved here after the recommendation of the government after they sent the swat team in after the conclusion of the homesteading fight. And Big Water, especially this part of Big Water what we call, "Big Water proper or Boston Harbor," is the old town and a lot of what you see has been here since the late 1950's. We still have movie shacks from the Greatest Story Ever Told being filmed here. But pretty much if you were to come here in 1960, the population was totally comprised of construction workers, either left over from the dam, Glen Canyon Dam, or hoping to work on Navajo generating station on the reservation near Page, and prostitutes.

Jay: Prostitutes?

Elizabeth: Yes. Big Water's first name was '14 Mile House', and that was because it was 14 miles from Page. Page was a federal enclave of... I mean it was a federally owned town. Technically there couldn't be any booze or anything there, so they drive out here. Budica's office, Boston Harbor Place, was a bar and a brothel. So when we moved here those prostitutes were aging. Alex appointed one of them the First Justice of the Peace; she was great, until she died. Then the town kind of grew up a little bit because it is so much cheaper to live here than in Page. Page is so over-priced and ridiculous and still is. That is where we attract our main population base to this day. But anyway, so that is what Big Water was when we moved here. And yes, nobody liked us

much. We owned the local restaurant and bar. Alex always had a particular in with American Indians, not so much Navajo as Sioux; they were relocated down here. He sponsored their baseball team and that kind of thing. Anyway we had some wild and crazy days there early on, running that bar, Hard Hat Cafe, [*she laughs*] and the Red Desert Inn, and Hard Hat, well the bar was Hard Hat. I went off to law school in the late 70's and didn't keep way up on it. When I graduated from law school I practiced in Salt Lake City for a couple of years, which was great. Got my feet wet, made a brief foray and moved to Montana, I took about half the family with me, and poor Alex was doing a thousand mile commute. That was kind of hard on him, but in 1983 we all decided we would come home, and we did. We closed out Montana and closed out Salt Lake and came home. Shortly there after, it wasn't Alex's suggestion, the county had appointed him to the service district board that ran the water and fire systems here. It was actually a fellow board member that said, "I'm old and I want to be buried in Big Water," and as a service district we cannot do a cemetery. So we launched a feasibility committee to check into incorporating, we did a huge, nice report on it, I wrote it, I wrote everything [*she laughs*]. I wrote everything Alex wrote by the way. So then we had a mock, well a straw election, out here to determine mayor and council. Alex won mayor, so then we had to start playing our political cards right over in Kanab to make sure they would ratify what the people out here had decided. We had some pretty good cards to play because Big Water, even people who hate Alex's guts, he taught them early on that when it came to



politics we are Big Water or we're nothing. We have close races in Kane County and if Big Water will come in as a 110, now a 210 vote block, and turn races, they will pay attention to us. It has been many a day after election when outside our door has been a County Commissioner going, "Until Big Water came in, I lost." So the whole town, even those that don't like us, figured that out, so when we have a caucus before an election all these people come and we decide. I mean we talk, we debate, we do whatever, and we say, "Okay, tomorrow everybody is going down and voting for the same person, and we do. We have turned so many elections that way. So of course, as a result of that we had sympathetic county commissioners when we showed up with our petition to incorporate, and please, this is who we voted for as mayor in our council, please will you ratify that in appointment. And they did, so in December 1983 Kane County Commission approved our articles and incorporation, approved our appointment, the State of Utah, late that month, I think it was like the 29th, right before the turn of the year, approved or issued our articles of corporation. Then we had six months until July 1st before it formally took effect, but our council acted informally during that time, and it was good, it was a good practice. On July 1, 1984 we were incorporated and our own business. Let's see, so Alex ran for election in 1985, elected again overwhelmingly, 1989, elected again overwhelmingly in 1993, elected again in somewhat of a close election, for other reasons, but elected, and then he retired in 1994.

Jay: The word or the name "Big Water." Where did that come from?

Elizabeth: Oh that's funny.

Suzi: I want to know that too.

Elizabeth: We were in Glen Canyon City, you know it used to irk me all to death, because he would drive into Page and Glen Canyon Bowl, Glen Canyon Motel, etc. just Glen Canyon, I really hated it. There were people who had lived here for a long time and liked it just fine. As part of the incorporation process there was a debate about the name. I remember we had meetings with like a hundred people there coming up with these names, Powell City, yuk, in Utah you do "city" even though you are not a city. Powell, Lone Rock, I think Lone Rock was my favorite. But all these names being thrown, thrown, thrown, after a minute we said, "You know we have got to narrow this baby down." It was a late night meeting in my law office across the street, we were just drowning in all these names and Alex said, "Okay, let's go around the room and everybody say the name of the street that they grew up on." So we started going around the room, "Wilson...you know, that's not going to work." Joanna said, what did she say, not big water, something water, in Billings, Montana. And Alex said, "Big Water!" That is what Tahoe means 'big water'. So it ended up on the same election ballot where we had Alex and the rest of the council candidates, we had to vote between Glen Canyon City and Big Water, and Big Water won.

Suzi: So Tahoe means big water?

Elizabeth: Yes, apparently, that's what Alex said.

Jay: Is that a Shoshonian word?

Elizabeth: I don't know. Are those the Indians that live there?

Jay: Shoshone language?

Elizabeth: I thought they lived in Montana.

Suzi: Yes, she was wondering if they lived near Tahoe. The Shoshones?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Jay: The people that lived...you've got Goshute, and all those people that live in Nevada and Southern Idaho, and I assume in the foothills of the Sierra are people of the Shoshone language.

Elizabeth: Okay.

Jay: There are lots of different tribes. That is what I was talking about.

Elizabeth: Well, give me a break, I need to smoke a cigarette guys.

Jay: We have gone through FLPMA; we have gone through, sort of gone through, the sagebrush rebellion. Do you want to continue on with that? You know we talked about that as the beginning of the sagebrush rebellion. Do you want to describe Alex's part in that beginning?

Elizabeth: I just think our case, our civil case, with the respect to the homesteading, and the judges ruling that prompting congress to declare ownership. You know at some point, history is going to look back and say, "Whow." It was the people of the United States vs. Alex Joseph et al that started the sagebrush rebellion. It was disorganized and everything like that until 1980 when President Reagan endorsed it in his platform running for president. Of course he never followed up on it one little bit. And we have just gone progressively back since then. They don't call it the rebellion anymore they decided that was politically

incorrect [*she laughs as she speaks*] I think it is the 'wise-use movement'.

'People's wise-use movement', is what they call it now. It's as alive and active, perhaps now, then it has ever been. At some point the Western United States are going to say, "Hey," or maybe not, I don't know, but they are going to whine about it [*she laughs*]. We really whine good in this country, because when it comes to Utah we say, "the state line ends at Pesa." Even though Mike Leavitt is a Cedar City native and he has paid perhaps more attention to us than others. But then I work in Arizona and the state line ends at Flagstaff, there. So, it's amusing.

Jay: Maybe this isn't the place to talk about the Strip out in the Uinta Basin, do you know about that?

Elizabeth: Not really, in Uinta.

Jay: Well, it was just short of an artificial line, like you are describing. And it became no-man's-land. In other words the jurisdiction of Salt Lake didn't go that far and you get into those squabbles.

Elizabeth: Yes, we really do that and you know when it comes to Grand Staircase, I think Governor Leavitt has been particularly involved down here and probably played his cards right. There is a bunch of people in Big Water, not a bunch, a few, who are really active in the task forces and everything with respect to the Monument. That is all his doing or we would have been excluded altogether.

Jay: Why I think you are right about him being active and I think him and his staff can be said to have brought off that land swap on school sections- trust land.

Elizabeth: Oh man, that was an amazing strike out of the skies. You know what they are talking about, initially, what they were talking about was a Sun City North, 40,000 people right out here. I went to my general manager when that first came out and I said, "What do you think about 40,000 more listeners?" [*she laughs*]. With respect to Andelecht, which was the coal development that was foreclosed by the creation of the Monument, I was involved in that for, oh gosh six, seven years before it happened, both as City Attorney and reporter. I was the only reporter that the project manager talked to for about three months after it happened. Dave Shaver, out of Price, I talked to him the day it happened and he was so stunned, so stunned that they hadn't been given any notice whatsoever. It was my understanding that they rolled Bill Orton, who was our Congressman at the time, out of bed in the middle of the night and told him, "Hey, guess what?" But Mike Leavitt has really made the difference. So now the people in Big Water are excited about the visitor center they are going to build here. The big fight now is *where* are they going to put it. You know they have distracted us I guess a little bit.

Jay: We think we are part of that effort because we're working on BLM money to gather this information.

Elizabeth: Good.

Jay: Suzi has a great idea about a CD, so that we become users of this information as well as documenters.

Elizabeth: That would be great.

Jay: And the CD would be like a, maybe like an introduction and orientation for visitors, and/or, a tool to be used in schools to bring school children into a little better understanding of where they are. So part of the use of this information can be said to be head into that kind of thing, if we can bring it on. We have been at this for what? A year and a half?

Suzi: Yeah, about a year and a half.

Jay: But the ideas that we have put forward so far have been well received by the BLM, so we think that would be helpful.

Elizabeth: Good.

Jay: Let's talk a little bit more about Big Water, your explanation of incorporation. How well did incorporation work? Do you have anything noteworthy to say about that?

Elizabeth: I think it worked really well. When we incorporated we were just this Plat A, or what we now call "Boston Harbor." Just exactly where we are sitting, we are cleaning up relatively fast, but this ramshackle whatever, but when we incorporated, we incorporated six square miles, which was the service district boundaries. Ironical about incorporation, the whole reason we incorporated was to have a cemetery, and we don't have a cemetery. I mean Alex is sitting over there on the table. Not that we would bury him in a cemetery if we had one. What they call "Buena Vista," which is Chesapeake Bay, which is a few miles down the road, off to the, whatever side of highway 89, the left side, headed toward Page. That was there but they were part of the service district and that's all anybody was, part of the service district. So they had water and fire

protection, but they didn't have anything else. Then the whole other side of the highway was totally undeveloped, 100% undeveloped and it is beautiful property because it's got a lake view. What do they call that? We call it, officially, it is Narrow Gansit Bay, they call it "Lake View," I think. Anyway, the people that live there...

Jay: Who owns that property?

Elizabeth: Well, that's an interesting story too. The Federal Government owned 85% of Big Water but in the late 1950's they chopped a bunch of parcels down the road on both sides, but principally on the right side of the highway and sold it at auction on the doorsteps on the Federal Courthouse in Salt Lake City, to veterans!

Jay: Veterans.

Elizabeth: To veterans only, and a bunch of people, for whatever reason, went down and bid and got this property dirt cheap, just absolutely dirt cheap. I guess based on the promise of Lake Powell or something. So a lot of them have since sold that, after it was developed, I mean they made a very, very [*she chuckles*] nice return on their investment. But what Alex did, which was kind of amazing as mayor, generally when you go into a whole new area of development you have impact fees, I mean to get the power strung up there, the poor lonely person had to pay tens of thousands of dollars to be repaid as people moved in and paid for their share of the line, then the power company would shell them back some bucks. But in order to move in there they had to pay the whole thing. So me, a city attorney, I told Alex what we do is we charge whoever is

going in there, we smack them and they will get it back and he said, "No, no that's not right." So he took general fund monies and actually did the work himself, spent a year on a back hoe going in there and installing water lines totally up into that whole right-side of the highway, so it was infrastructure ready to move into. It had power and water, and we don't do sewer here so that was the property owner's problem. But he opened up that whole side for development, and we went in and zoned it for very high rent. It was going to be expensive to live up there. We fought our battles with the mobile homes and everything else, like every other town. Just opened up that most beautiful area of town and I really think more than anything else, that is his testament to the town, to his tenure as mayor, that he did that. The property value of Big Water went from like \$600,000 in 1983 to when he left office, it was approaching 10 million dollars. And it has to be out of the roof since, because all those commercial boat storages have built in.

Jay: Well there is a return to the city from that evaluation.

Elizabeth: There is. For years we didn't have a property tax, which was wonderful and then they did impose one and pretty much maintain it so people got used to it. I've been out of city government since August 1995 so I'm not well advised exactly where there finances are except apparently they are doing just fine.

Jay: Good, I mean for the long-term you have got to have something.

Elizabeth: Yeah. We were terribly frustrated by Kanab running our affairs. Kanab, not that we didn't have friends over there or care about them, but they were just so out of touch. The Big Water School, to my knowledge, is the only school in



the whole state of Utah that doesn't have an LDS faculty member. So that the only thing that remotely resembles us is some place like Price. Our affairs were being decided in a parking lot of the LDS church on Sunday mornings and that was just something that we couldn't relate to. That's just not where [*she laughs as she speaks*] we're coming from. And basically they were afraid of us because we have got such potential, given our proximity to Lake Powell. Their paranoia started back when the dam was first proposed back in the 50's because the Federal Government's initial plan was to locate here. And Kanab just went "Wah!" You look at the master plans from the early 1960's and they envision a city of 30,000 people right here.

Jay: It could happen.

Elizabeth: It could have happened, it would have happened, and Kanab just couldn't handle it. The power plant in the 70's is another example, the one they wanted to build up on the Kaiparowits Plateau. But like I say, publicly we are required to be against a monument, because of just everything about it. We weren't so sad, we weren't so sad because, Andelecht was very adamant that their people would be in Big Water, and so we would have been Page at the very minimum. You know, I have to buy tires two months earlier than the people in the cities, but that is a small price to pay for this rural lifestyle. So when Andelecht went down we screamed loud publicly and privately we are saying, "Thanks Bill."

End of side B, Tape 1

Begin side A, Tape 2

Jay: We've discussed the technicalities of developing the Big Water community. How did it work as a social unit? Do you want to comment on that?

Elizabeth: Oh yes, from the beginning we had, well, let's see, as the elections sorted out, like I say, we and our close friends, who are not necessarily polygamists, there are only a few that are. Unlike Colorado City, this is a very cosmopolitan, eclectic, community. But there was always this hard-core group mostly from the old days, that just hated us, hated us big time. They were forever getting the AG to come in and look at our books, and do this and do that. It didn't help that Alex was mayor, I was the only attorney in town, so who else is going to be city Attorney? But Alex's wife, Delana, was city clerk for several years, and that just all added fuel to the pot. I guess it came to a head in the 1992 election when one particular monied troublemaker moved to town, and at that time we were publishing The Big Water Times, which was a fairly influential newspaper in the county. Our only competition was Southern Utah News, they've dramatically improved under new ownership for several years, but at the time, they were Mormon owned and you know, we just had no trouble trampling over them when it came to news. We chased a sheriff's candidate out of the race because of something we uncovered that was featured on channel 5. Big Water Times on channel 5 [*she says excitedly*]. So

that was really great, and we enjoyed that. This guy moved to town and he had the resources to start a counter newspaper that was kind of Nauvoo going on, because that is essentially what brought down Joseph Smith, was competition, newspaper competition that he couldn't quite handle. But this guy, boy, man he spewed ungodly lies, and his circulation was equal to ours. It was a really stressful time and at that time he filed for mayor against Alex on the strength of his newspaper reputability, no wait a minute, yeah he filed, now how did that work? He filed for a council and they promoted this guy who had just been in the community for a few months as a schoolteacher, to run for mayor against Alex. So we sponsored somebody to file a lawsuit against them challenging, which is what you have to do in Utah, you can't recall or anything like that in Utah. We went to court on the deal, they had the hearing up in Panguitch, and when it came to this guy who was doing the newspaper and that, he was such a phony. He gets up on the stand, and he's got his two-year-old kid sitting on his lap.

Jay: That wasn't a prop, was it?

Elizabeth: Oh, I don't think so [*she says sarcastically*]. Anyway, he is just here forever, and we were challenging his residency, but the Justice of the Peace, the Judge of the Justice Court had tipped me off to a case and so we subpoenaed him and he got on the stand, and we said, "Have you had occasion to deal with this guy?" He says, "Yeah, yeah, he had a speeding ticket to my court, and a ticket that he didn't have a Utah drivers license, to my court." And he said, "He brought in all this documentation that he lived in California, he paid his

income taxes in California, and rent, and he owned this and that, and he didn't need to be registered in Utah because he wasn't a resident of Utah." [*she laughs*]. So it took Judge Tibbs about 10 seconds to say, "You're off the ballot." This other guy who we knew, I mean this is a small town, we knew him, he just moved in, took a job teaching at school, which he was subsequently fired from. He had his rental people get on the stand and say, "Oh no, he rented a year ago, maybe he just hasn't been around, but he rented a year ago." And we are just saying, "Wow." We put the school district superintendent on the stand and he said, "Yes, I just hired him a month ago, two months ago, whatever." But what we failed to do, and that was one of the biggest failures of my political career, was to interview this superintendent thoroughly enough, because what he told us *after* the case was over, he says, "When the guy came in and said, 'do you have a job?' We said, 'yeah, we have a job over in Big Water.'" And he said, "Where's Big Water?"

Jay: As if he has lived there for a year, huh?

Elizabeth: Right, right. So you know that question would have thrown him off the ballot. But anyway, that was the closest race Alex had, with those people really rallying their troops. It sort of soured him on it a little bit, and he said -when it was all said and done, he said he should have done two terms and quit. It wasn't that bad that he did three and came that close. But then when he retired, we fielded a plural wife, not our family, a family down the street. A plural wife, schoolteacher, for mayor and she won handily. She was a little overwhelmed by the job, you know where Alex was just...and every vote was

unanimous, she was one of those, and she was a woman [*she laughs*].

Anyway, we sort of let our guard down in this last election, two years ago, we just didn't care, and where I had been so intensely involved in the strategy for fifteen years, I was distracted by my job in Page and I was assured by people who were just really involved out here that we didn't have a chance, we didn't have a chance. I didn't put any energy into the election. I mean we were really good about getting our absentees in and getting our people out. That day people were on their way to work in Page, and just drove by the polls. We lost by three votes. Which was inexcusable but a good lesson, so for two years now we have had, theoretically, those people in charge but we've had so many challenges from the outside, we have kind of come back together again. Again, I haven't been involved this fall, but we have been, the family has been very involved in this upcoming election. We intend to get in there and take control of the city council. But right now it is not so much us and them, its us *and* them, against Kane County and the Federal Government. So the town is probably more coalesced than it has ever been.

Jay: I think community is an interesting word that it requires work to get that unity.

Elizabeth: Very good point. The other thing is, you probably are aware of, when you are so close to a border, how things dissolve. There was, I am not sure if it is still in existence, but a task force with Greenhaven, Arizona, just across the border. It was as simple as this, they were saying, "If you could get a major shopping center in Big Water, we are eight miles from Page and we are eight miles from Big Water. If we go to Big Water we can go sixty-five miles an hour all the

way there. If we go to Page, we have to go sixty-five, forty-five, thirty-five, twenty-five, thirty-five, forty-five, forty. They say we will come there, we just will. And so you have those kinds of dynamics going on too where just forget the borderline, I mean what is it, except a sign.

Jay: I would like to return to something you said. You were talking about a group with which you are affiliated, I have forgotten, I didn't write it down, I'm sorry.

Elizabeth: Confederate Nations of Israel?

Jay: Confederate Nations of Israel. Would you elaborate on that a bit please?

Elizabeth: Yes. I'd be happy to. Confederate Nations of Israel was founded in 1978, and Alex said, "Christians go to church every Sunday and pray that the kingdom of God will come on the earth. And then they go out every Monday and practice democracy, which is antithetical to a kingdom." He says, "If that is how it is going to be for eternity then why don't we practice up on it on earth?" It was interesting that the Modesto B, like I said when Alex died, a year ago, he went on immediate tour for a week because for example, the main founding guy of this whole area, Greenhaven, Bill Green when he died he made the back page obituary. When Alex died he, in the Page paper, "Big Water founder passes away," front page lead screaming headline. Front page lead headline in The Salt Lake Tribune. In Modesto B, where he grew up, it said, "Former detective passes away," and then the sub headline said, "A. Joseph founded the kingdom of God." And I am thinking even in my newspaper I would have said, "*Thought*, he founded the kingdom of God,"

you know [*she says with a mocking tone in her voice*]. What are you people saying? So, there were two concurrent things going on at once, and I believe that was the case with Joseph Smith too, where he had his public church but he had his kind of secret kingdom of God. We did the two things, concurrently, baptism by immersion we view as a political rite of citizenship into the kingdom of God. We are huge monarchy fans, my senior thesis for law school, for Juris Prudence, was Monarchy vs. Democracy, Why Monarchy Was Better. I got an A, whoa! Helped get me out of there. But the Confederacy is a non-religious, non-partisan, true meaning of the word confederate. We welcome any neighbor into this organization, it is made up of twenty-four judges and quorum, seventy senators, and a sanhedrin, and fifty counselors, and a council of fifty, charged with temporal affairs, senate charged with spiritual affairs, the quorum of judges charged with working things out. So we meet twice a year, in what we call "business meetings" different members of the Confederacy take turns in hosting it. It is being hosted this weekend by Alex's' ten year old son, Easy, [*she whispers as she speaks*] of course his mother is really busy. The host chooses a theme, we have done weekends of economics, weekends of history, seminars, and different things going on. The Confederacy member nations determine by heads of households, so I belong to the Joseph household, which has a head, and that was standing Alex's' demise. I don't hold a seat, don't want to hold a seat, but the Confederacy is unanimous they can not take any action without a unanimous vote. In twenty-three, going on twenty-four years, the only action

that the Confederacy has taken is, they did pass on year, a long time ago, they did pass a statement of principles, freedom, whatever, it is hanging on the wall over there. But the only other thing they can agree on is when they are next going to meet [*she laughs*], which is pretty easy you pull out the calendar and say, "Okay the equinox in March." But that is the only thing they have been able to agree on. They have had fun, they have practiced things. What it is, should we be without a fat government, whatever it might be, that we have a government in place. If my neighbor's dog bites my kid, instead of shooting the dog and the neighbor, I have a place to go and resolve that dispute, so we have just practiced that. We have manufactured a few disputes over the years and resolved them. What we like to say is that we live in the desert and we need entertainment, and so we have to manufacture our own, and we have done a pretty good job of it. But the kingdom of God is separate. You don't have to be baptized, the only requirement for membership in the Confederacy is to stand up and say, "Sign me on." The kingdom of God citizenship admission is baptism, profession of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, all the usual. And that is about all there is to that. Then we have a thing called Joseph's court, which is our family and our relatives, our blood relatives, belong to Joseph's court. Joseph's court has only met three times in that many years. If there is some issue before the Confederacy we sit down in Joseph's court and come to a consensus, then we go to the Confederacy, and go as a united voice. But it all goes back to, and that is what gives the Mormons fits, and we love it, they don't talk about it much any more, but the fundamentalists



do and that is in the last days some guy named Joseph was going to rise up and pull everything together. What is the word for that? Anyway they hate that, I mean the church and Alex's detractors have gone to a lot of pains to try to show that Joseph is not his name, that it was something he assumed, and with no luck. His lovely eighty year old mother is up the street, she is named Thelma Joseph and has been ever since she married his dad, Alex. So we have always gotten a kick out of that. But we do stall ourselves as the lost tribe of Joseph. One thing Alex taught was the tribe of Joseph wasn't lost except that they wanted to be lost, who can't find their way home in this day and age? It is how they are in the way, one of my favorite things he said, he says, "This is how it is, you've got this bar and all these people in it, and a fight breaks out. The tribe of Juda, they are up standing on the bar, screaming they will take anybody on. The tribe of Joseph is sitting at a back table, nursing their drinks, and as soon as the fracas breaks out they put a bunch of money on the table and sneak out the back door." *[she laughs]*. So that is how he described us, "sneaking out the back door." Gotta stay lost, who knows. I like to say there are things I know, and things I hope, I don't like to use the word believe. So I hope I am the tribe of Joseph, I hope I am married to Alex the day I die, but I don't know that, it is something to hope. And everybody can hope what they want.

Jay: This next question could be very personal, and I leave you always with the right of refusal.

Elizabeth: Wow.

Jay: But, earlier you said that you spoke for Alex often and still do. I wondered then, and I wonder now if you mean you speak for Alex spiritually?

Elizabeth: No [*she is quick to answer*]. I don't think. No, he was plenty satisfied when he was alive, if whatever I could handle, I handled, in terms of press and that. Then when he got sick it was such a shock. I've said, "Call me up at work and say somebody walked in this afternoon and shot Alex and he's dead." was one hundred times less shocking than to go to the doctor that day that we did and say it's cancer and it's inoperable and terminal and go home, or come back once a week for chemo. For him to be sick, and one of our kids, not our kid but a friend's kid was going to Dixie at the time when he was in the hospital in St. George for quite awhile. She said- a professor who didn't know Alex at all but knew of him," she says, 'he just struck me as the kind of guy who wouldn't get sick.' That was the deal. So that was really difficult. It was hard for Alex because he really felt, and I don't know how many people he shared it with, but I was one of them, he said, "That when he understood what God needed him to do, or wanted him, or was asking him, it was essential to him to know what time period he had to do it in." And so he had a thing in his head and he would be very much alive and well and healthy today given that thing in his head. That was really hard on him, and then given just his stamina and to do two and one half years, where other cancer people, if they are going to die they don't generally do that long, at least going down hill the whole time. He was really, really in denial, it just didn't fit with his plan. I found myself saying when he was sick that I felt like the picture that he was, that I feel like

my testimony, as Elizabeth Joseph, is very important and that it is important to him. And that I need to perhaps be forty-six and not fifty-six when I am talking to you guys, I don't know. But that was one rational, that got me through his sickness. Since he has died, and I have found myself in this position a lot, I feel even more strongly about that. I mean he got to the place where he couldn't speak for himself. So, honestly if his testimony has to be anything he needed to be in somewhere comfortable and let people like me, who are strong, be doing it for him. So, yeah, I do, I can't even begin to speak about what was going on in his head the whole time- it was a marvel to me and a place that I didn't have to go because of him. I remember that he used to say a lot, "Who do *I* talk to? Who is *my* friend?" And it was true, everybody was coming to him just sucking, sucking, sucking. There was nobody in his life except for some casual fun friends, who gave him any relief- it was constant. I used to come home from law school in the 70's, for a weekend, you know Alex, I am driving seven hundred miles here, and it is 3:00 o'clock in morning, and you are with somebody who lives down the street who can just as easily see you Sunday night. He would sympathize but, he just gave so much and so I feel obligated to do as much, in that vein as I can. I feel a little frustrated because I did two weeks ago speak in Salt Lake. But when Alex was alive, I was kind of the go to spokeswoman for plural wives, and man, you don't know how many people called me in the few months after his death, and said, "We want to interview you." And they always think they have to pitch you, even though we have done this, and we do everything, not

everything, but most. At some point I have to interrupt them and say, "Okay, okay, do you know he died?" "Oh no, good-bye."

Suzi: Really?

Elizabeth: Even the Wasatch Front that I have been [*tape becomes unintelligible*] Mary Potter, finally she is a plural wife, but you don't know how that grated on my nerves, that months and months were going by that Mary Potter was the spokeswoman for pro polygamy wives and she is a monogamist, and I just got written off because Alex died.

Jay: You still represent the spirit of Alex's ideas. I can hear that in your voice and your tone.

Elizabeth: I do. I don't represent the family anymore. It has been very difficult, when it comes to something this hard, people say, "Well at least you have the best support group in the world." Are you kidding? The worst support group in the world, for example, with me, I really did my grieving on the diagnosis, I did that, I was crying on the way to work.. So anyway when he died we were just all over the map in terms of where we were at in terms of unique individuals, and whatever. I know, I can't even think when it was, last winter sometime, because when he was diagnosed between then and when he died, we always had family dinners on Sunday, but when he was diagnosed we started having wives only, and him for family breakfast Sunday, which got increasingly depressing, and depressing, and depressing, because he got too sick to come. So we just sort of scattered to the four winds. I work in Page, I developed a network of friends in Page. Home was just not where I looked to

for much support. I think maybe now at this anniversary, we are a little jolted, because the kids, by contrast to us, the kids when their dad died are just one big melted up bunch. They are so much more together than ever.

Jay: Do they look to each other?

Elizabeth: Yes. They spend very deliberate time with one another. We all have our contacts with the kids and say, "Okay, okay, that's our family, that's our family, look how good the kids are doing." But it is time for the wives, I think, to say, "Okay we have a lot in common, we own a lot of things together, and we had Alex, and let's get over it, and get on with it and remember what good friends we were." I sense we are on that threshold with that. It's been a strange year.

Jay: When I ask that question about you speaking the spirit of Alex's' ideas...

End of Side A, Tape 2

Begin Side B, Tape 2

Jay: I started to ask a question about you representing the spirit of Alex Joseph's ideas. If you could talk with him what would he tell you about this unity issue that you just talked about, or lack there of?

Elizabeth: Oh man. I don't think he would really tell me much. In a couple of the last interviews he did right before he died, he couldn't emphasize enough whatever we ended up doing, he said in one, "I just want them to do good things in the company of good people." He made it really clear, particularly with respect to

Dawn, his youngest wife, who is just 29 now, and hadn't had a child and wanted to so badly. He was really explicit about it- he hoped Dawn would find an arrangement where she could realize that. But he told us that from day one, even before he was sick, "If something happens to me that doesn't mean something happens to you. You have a life, live it." I don't think he would counsel anything in particular, he might counsel me particularly, and say, "What you need to do is, instead of coming home, because you got up at 4:00 o'clock, take a nap, get up and work for three hours and go to bed. You need to not take a nap and go visit Joanna." I know exactly what he would tell different ones of us because it is all he ever told us when he was around [*she chuckles*]. He is satisfied for it to be however the way it is, he really is. I have a lot of confidence in that. You know if we are right, then he has another family that he is dealing with, and he doesn't have one moment to think about us.

Jay: But you know that isn't true, he is thinking about you.

Elizabeth: Oh, we think, I don't know. I'm sure he is, I know he is thinking about my children, and they are doing splendidly. I think he is okay with wherever I am at.

Jay: You said he was shocked when he was diagnosed. How long did it take him to sort of resolve that and reconcile himself to the inevitable?

Elizabeth: Between thinking, I hope I made that point, that he was right or he heard God right about the time he needed. What he didn't understand was that it didn't necessarily require his presence here, and in fact it required his not presence

here to finish it off. That is why I think my testimony, and everybody else's, now and in the next whatever, as long as anybody is interested, is going to be very critical to the story. But in terms of time, because even though he wasn't doing famously on chemo, relative to his disease, he was doing very, very, very, very well. So when you do that for several months, weekly, you tend to think any moment here and I'm breaking out and I'm in remission, and so it was a good two years. I think I can say that with some emphaticness. CBS did a two-hour documentary on us that they started filming in March 1998, and they had the most incredible timing of what they got in that theme. But the day they arrived was a chemo day, and I went with him to St. George and that was the first time, in March 1998, when the chemo first failed him big time. They have got this on tape; they bring him his results and he looks at them and he says, "Holy cats, I got to move to Idaho, this environment is not good for me." *[she laughs]* But then what grabbed me so much about this documentary was, I was living here the whole five weeks they were here, I saw so much in the documentary that I didn't see in real life! Wow, that was going on then? That was going on then? I mean I just wasn't there. The one thing that really got me, I had gone after his prescription at the hospital after that report was handed to him, and he went out into the parking lot of the oncology place by the hospital to smoke a cigarette, so I wasn't there but CBS was, and the resignation in his posture was just so, there.

Jay: You touched your shoulders as if his shoulders were sagging.

Elizabeth: It was his shoulders that were...

Suzi: He had held everything so strong and you just saw him...

Elizabeth: And he just...this is it. So I think it was essentially two years after his diagnosis and six months before he died that he kind of gave up. Then they put him on what they call, "last resort chemo." They came home in late August, its funny, the way he phrased it was, "I'm not doing chemo anymore it's not working. They told me to tell you not to set a plate for me at Thanksgiving." It is our biggest holiday, because we don't do Christmas. That was how he put it, he said, "I got thirty to ninety days, I pick thirty." And so he picked what he wanted. Then at Thanksgiving, we set a plate for him down here, and the kids in Montana fully intended to, we have seven kids up there, [*she laughs as she speaks*] and they didn't. I didn't hear this story until two weeks ago when I was up there. Clarissa, his daughter, she has got the most beautiful house and she had this big Thanksgiving spread and all this company. Her little four year old did something to the toilet right upstairs. Right as they are getting ready to sit down, the chandelier above the turkey just comes crashing down on the turkey, with all this toilet stuff [*she laughs*]. Alex's son, Mason, says, "You know, I've never heard that's the way you baste a turkey." And poor Clarissa, his daughter, that was hosting this thing was just sobbing and crying, and in a closet carrying on. Then she goes, "It's because I didn't set him a place for Thanksgiving." So Alex will go down in history for wrecking Thanksgiving in Montana last year. But, yeah, I feel like I can speak for him, I have a pretty good beat on him.

Suzi: How would you best describe him? His character?



Elizabeth: Main thing about Alex, well, no I can't say main, but the main reason that people liked him was his sense of humor. He was just stand-up comedian extraordinaire. His son, Mason, is his clone, it's so nice. It was fun having Mason around even before Alex got sick just because he was this twenty year old version of Alex, according to everybody who knew Alex at twenty years old. Mason, he looks like his dad, he thinks like his dad, he talks like his dad, he just has a little more energy for the stand-up routine. But just extremely intelligent, very compassionate to the point where I developed this whole philosophy about how men basically, good men, are so guileless, that they need women with intuition who are bitches around to protect them. I don't know how many times I have said to Alex and his other wives, "This person is bad news." *[she whispers as she speaks]* "No they're not, why are you being so mean?" *[she laughs as she speaks]* And the person turns out to be bad news. Unfortunately he had us for a little bit of a buffer. I love that about men that they are that way, I feel sorry for them. I had an interview on the radio today about that. Somebody I regularly interview I said, "I feel so bad for guys, because we tell them what we want and they do it then we bitch at them for doing it." *[she and Suzi laugh]*

Suzi: That is somewhat true isn't it?

Elizabeth: "Well, I did what you wanted." "Well, that's not really what I wanted. I wanted you to tell me to go to hell. Be a man." Super respectful of women, Alex was one of those, I don't know if it is something unique at all, but guys really liked him, and wanted to be friends with him. Women, whatever they

thought of him in that regard, liked him, just liked him. And it was because he so hugely respected women. He often said, "I could have surrounded myself with a bunch of men, to accomplish this mission, but women are so much better at getting things done." So he was typical man, in that way, to me, he was the dreamer, he would envision things and we would execute them. It was a nice combination, it seemed to really work.

Suzi: When you were a college girl in Montana, and you had grown up in this strict Methodist house, your two friends had a plural marriage with Alex. I can put myself there, I am almost there in age and everything else. Did you go to California to meet them when you left your fiancé?

Elizabeth: No, they were here in Southern Utah.

Suzi: What happened on that trip?

Elizabeth: It's really bizarre. As part of my whole Born Again Christian experience as a teenager, my Bible study leader said one time, "Do you think your husband is alive in the world?" I am fifteen, you know. I hadn't really thought of it like that, and I said, "Well I should think so." I hope I don't marry someone fifteen years my junior, that hasn't been born. And she says, "Well, you will pray for him when you marry him, so why aren't you praying for him right now?" So from that day forward, everyday I would pray for my husband, whoever he was, wherever he was, whatever he was doing. And so I had five years of that under my belt. I went out to dinner with him, in Montana when I was in school. There were several of us, and I was riding in the back seat of his car. And he says, "So I hear you call yourself a Christian?" And I said, "Yeah."

He said, "Did you ever hear the one about 'walk as he walked'?" Then he gave me his business card when he took me home, he goes, "Here, I am your friend." So I am thinking, oh, wow, whatever. But anyway, when I came down here with the intention of checking it out, and going back, the first day he was living out in the canyon, Cottonwood Canyon, on our private property before we homesteaded. He said, "Do you want to go for a ride?" And I said, "Yeah." So we got in the pickup truck, even though I was raised in Montana, and my dad was a cowboy, my dad went to *great* lengths to make sure his kids were city kids [*she laughs*]. He did! We are driving down the road and all the sudden there are some cows and some cowboys, and he said, "Oh, I gotta stop." So he pulls off the road, gets out of the truck, and I get out of the truck, and there are these cowboys from Tropic, and Cannonville. At that time Alex had long hair, and a bandanna and stuff, and these guys, who are like my dad say, "Alex, hey, how's it going?" I couldn't believe that they were best friends; I mean back at the house was a deer they had poached and killed. But Alex hangs out with them, we went into town and he bought them grape pop because that is what they liked. We drove miles and miles to find them again and give them their grape pop. That really hit me, wow, because I love my dad and my dad was so cool, and here is a guy that my dad would love, although he didn't for a long time, he was going to kill him, eventually he did love him. Anyway, we drove into town and he knew my interest was history and politics. He just talked in that kind of way, it was just fascinating to me. I never quite talked to anybody with that view. University of Montana was

called, "the Berkeley of the Rockies." But coming home, and we were like a mile from where they lived, this big hill and the only way I know to describe it; it was like a subconscious ticker tape that went through my mind, your going to marry this guy. What I had concluded from several relationships over the course of junior, high school and then college was that if a guy wasn't smarter than me I didn't treat him well and I hated how I treated them, so I got rid of them. And this guy that I was engaged to was the only guy I had found that I felt like was smarter than me. And part of it was, he's smarter than him, you are going to marry him I thought. No kidding it was four seconds later and Alex kind of hit the brakes and stopped the truck and he said, "Did you just decide something?" And it took me a minute, my initial answer would have been, "No, what do you mean?" But I thought for a second and said, "Yeah, I did." The next day he went to California and came back that night and said, "When do you want to get married? Now or after you graduate?" I said, "I don't have to graduate." He said, "Yeah, you do."

Jay: To what do you attribute this presence?

Elizabeth: I have no...well I do, God. I mean what else?

Suzi: Had you looked into plural marriage before you went to visit?

Elizabeth: Yes, I had because our initial introduction to it was by Alex's close friend, Eric, who lives down the block. He was a graduate assistant who tutored Joanne. Eric had proposed to me like eighteen months before Alex. I really liked Eric, I liked him a lot. But there was just something there when Alex proposed, because Eric was still on the table. My Montana ethic was, if your

friend has a girlfriend, you don't get in the middle of that, and he knew that.

Alex said, "I wouldn't ordinarily, but, I just told Eric. Eric is aware of this and I told him may the best man win, and I am willing to let you declare who wins." Eric and I have since talked over twenty-five years. He knows he couldn't have done... he has a nice family, he is married to Joanna's triplet sister, beautiful children, and he's a plural wife.

Suzi: So little did you know in college that all your girlfriends would end up in your family?

Elizabeth: No! In fact in high school, because this is kind of interesting, the Gallitan Valley in Montana, Bozeman, was basically settled by people from Missouri who had principally been involved in the persecution of the Mormons. So I grew up in this little valley in Montana that was super anti-LDS, super anti-Catholic, super anti-democrat, but very conservative. One of my best friends was a Catholic, and I just felt so sorry for her, "oh, I'm so sorry your Catholic" [*they laugh*]. But then I got introduced to Mormons a little bit in high school but they were this little tiny click that hung out, because the anti-Mormon sentiment was so heavy, and I actually made friends with a couple of those people on purpose. But my friends didn't understand, I kind of had to have secret rendezvous with these other Mormon friends that I had. We would go do things on the weekends. But anyway, this kid, he was student body president, editor of the schoolbook, he was just everything. He was a senior and I was a sophomore, and I just fell hopelessly in love with this guy. We had the weirdest exchange in the spring, at the end of that school year. Just to

make conversation I said, "Where are you going to school?" He said, "BYU," which I had never heard of, I don't think. I was thinking of going to Puget Sound, PSU, and anyway I heard PSU, so I said, "So am I." The look on his face! So anyway we ended up dating, I was so in love with him, and I was his first girlfriend and he is a senior Mormon kid, he is an outcast from the Mormons because (A) he won't date anybody and (B) he is doing all this stuff they don't do like, involvement in politics. So I ended up dating this guy and I have never waited so long for anybody to *kiss me-hello!* We dated the whole summer it was the night before he left for school, and he finally kissed me. Then it was super complicated because I was so involved with this Christian organization, and he was so involved in the Mormon. All my Christian friends were going nuts and giving me books and, "my God, do you know they believe in polygamy?" So that was when I was made aware of that. His Mormon friends were hassling the hell out of him for not dating a Mormon. Then to complicate it worse, my dad was his dad's boss. My dad was a federal appointee with the federal agency, and his dad worked for my dad so, ah! Anyway, he goes off to BYU and I am a junior and you know, "my boyfriend is coming home at Christmas, he's coming home at Christmas." So, he comes home for Christmas, I will never forget this, we are downtown, it's a snowy night in Bozeman, we are shopping for Christmas, and he said "I am going to Paris this summer, for two years."

Suzi: A mission?

Elizabeth: Yes. He said, "I am going on a mission." I said, "That's nuts, you can't leave school to do something like that, you graduate then you go on a mission." He said, "No, it's just how it's done." I was stunned. Then he goes back to school and that summer I went to the University of Southern California to a journalism school workshop, and he was going to the mission home, or whatever they call it, is that what they call it?

Jay: It is called the mission-training center.

Elizabeth: The mission training center. So he says, "I'm going to be there, and then I'm leaving for Paris." I said, "Well, this will work out perfect because I am flying from Los Angeles into Salt Lake, and we can get together. Then he tells me, "We can't get together, there is no saying good-bye with these circumstances." Then we spent six months corresponding, acknowledging that one or the other of us is going to have to go the other way. After six months neither one of us was going to go the other way and callin' it off. Anyway, even after I got married and he graduated from BYU, I always saw Reed as a prophet, I really did.

Jay: What was his name?

Elizabeth: Robison, Reed Robison. He ended up, what is the big jewelry company up there?

Jay: Tanner.

Elizabeth: O.C. Tanner. He ended up with an MBA, I thought he would go to law school. But I *always* saw him as a potential prophet; he is just that kind of motivating guy. But anyway, we got together after he got back from his

mission, actually years later, he was married and had a family, and I was practicing law. We went out to lunch, and he said, "You know you didn't have to go this far to get to where I was." [*she laughs*] He couldn't believe I just bounced right over the top of him.

Suzi: It must have been a shock.

Elizabeth: It was. But so I did have that exposure to it before college.

Suzi: Do you consider yourself a pioneer woman?

Elizabeth: Yes, I do. I do, but I think more of myself as a, oh, not a descendant, what is the word, however, what is the word I am looking for, an extension of Martha Hughes Cannon and the twentieth century incarnation of Martha Hughes Cannon and Eliza Snow. We are the same woman, we just live in a different circumstance, but our message is *exactly* the same. And I suspect Jesus Christ's wives, I don't have any evidence of their testimony or life, but, I bet they were every bit as revolutionary. So not pioneer in terms of doing something nobody else did, but in terms of this century perhaps, or dispensation or whatever word you want to use.

Suzi: First, I want you to define in your own words, define feminist.

Elizabeth: Oh, oh.

Suzi: I know that is a hard one.

Elizabeth: Yeah, that's very hard.

Suzi: Just in a couple of extras, what you think.

Elizabeth: I can only see feminists in conjunction with a masculinist. I see male, female as absolutely essential, I define God that way. I feel sorry for women who



haven't found a man to start exploring and mining that potential. So definitely I see myself in the way I define it. I founded a group in 1978 called the Daughters of Diana, which is to teach girls in our community how to be good sisters. I think if you know how to be a good sister to a brother, that will carry over to be a good wife to a man. But, again, defining men, and we do specifically in this organization, define men as the sun, all bright, guileless. And that women are the moon, half dark and half-light, and the half light is the reflection from the man, and the half dark is all your femaleness. I wrote a long lecture about the dark side of the moon that our girls receive at puberty, and that is essentially to not use the dark side against your man because he has no clue what in the hell you're doing. You can hurt him so badly and if you start using it, the first place you will go is your children and use his children against him. That is the most awful thing any woman can do. If you put your dark side to good use and use your intuition, you can protect him, that kind of thing. But feminism to me is just being everything you can be. Alex, I feel like empowered me to be everything I wanted to be, out there. I was grand marshal! I was the first grand marshal in the parade in Page this year. Alex would have laughed at that, and I was embarrassed by it but, I have to admit, I thought it was kind of cool when all was said and done. Just for the records book, the first grand marshal in a parade in Page will be Elizabeth Joseph. But he was really empowering to me, and felt like I was really empowering to him. The eight of us investing our brains and confidence in him was hugely... you know chicken and the egg. Was he that way and that's why we married

him? Or was he that way because we married him? And we were satisfied to let it be a chicken and an egg, to go both ways because I think that is the truth of it. That he was stronger and smarter because of us and we were more powerful, and stronger and smarter and independent because of him.

Suzi: So it's the confidence to empower the people around you, to let them do what ever they want to do, and then the confidence to do everything you want to do?

Elizabeth: I think one of the biggest things Alex did to me was, you know we all have gifts, and I can say my ability to write is a gift, read is a gift, anything. Anyway, I have a lot of gifts but I know the one gift that I *learned* from Alex, that I derive the most pleasure from, and it's what he did, he showed me. He had it and he demonstrated it and now I do it and I love it, and that is to make people feel that they are really special. I love doing that.

End of Interview